

BISHOP STATEMENT ON HOUSE MEASURE TO RESPONSIBLY REDEPLOY TROOPS

July 16, 2007

Washington, D.C. – Last week, Congressman Tim Bishop (NY-1) joined a majority in the House of Representatives in successfully passing legislation to change direction in Iraq. The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act requires American forces to begin redeploying within 120 days and to complete the transition to a limited presence in Iraq by April 1, 2008.

The vote came on the same day as the release of the White House Interim Report on Iraq, which indicates that the Iraqi government has failed to meet key benchmarks endorsed by the President in January and that political reconciliation in Iraq is non-existent. In its fifth year, the war in Iraq has cost American taxpayers \$450 billion and new reports indicate that America spends \$10 billion per month on the war in Iraq. More than 3,600 Americans have lost their lives in Iraq and more than 26,000 have been wounded.

Below is a statement from Congressman Bishop from the Congressional Record of the debate on the bill.

“Mr. Speaker,

“I rise today in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. Delivering the solemn promise we made to set a new direction in Iraq, this legislation provides us with the opportunity to reaffirm our support for the responsible redeployment of our troops and a refocusing of our efforts on the real threat that is facing America -- fighting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, tracking down Osama bin Laden, and preventing another terrorist attack against America.

“Along with a great many of my colleagues, I spoke out against the President’s surge strategy when it was announced in January. We argued then, as we reiterate today, that Iraq is engaged in a civil war and thus political, not military, solutions are needed to address the problems facing the region. Yet, the President continues to operate under the assumption that somehow, some way, there is a military path to success. In other words, his strategy continues to be “stay the course” writ large.

“It has now been seven months since the President announced his surge strategy, with the stated goal of providing stability in Iraq so that the political reforms that are needed to secure the region can take place. Since then, more than 25,000 additional troops have deployed to Iraq, of whom 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded. All of this while the Iraqi government has failed to meet any of the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January, violence rates are at an all time high, and a recent government report estimates that Al Qaeda is the strongest it has been since the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

“Simply put, it is long past time for our involvement in this tragic episode to come to an end. The Iraqi people are the only ones that can bring a peaceful conclusion to this war. It is unfair to ask our troops and their families to continue to sacrifice while Iraqi leaders have done so little to achieve the political and security goals asked of them. Therefore, it is imperative that we begin

the gradual redeployment of troops as soon as possible to protect their lives and ensure the safety of America.

“Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate my opposition to this war. I believe the decision to invade Iraq is the single most devastating and misguided foreign policy decision our nation has ever made. I will vote for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act because I believe it is time to bring our troops home and end our involvement in this civil war.”